



# LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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## Independent Record Your Turn Article October 30, 2009

### **Progress Report by City-County Board of Health Access to Health Care Task Force**

In December 2008, the Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health approved a resolution that “recognizes health and health care are basic human rights and that everyone has a right to access to a universal healthcare system.”

In an effort to ensure adequate access to quality health care for all Lewis and Clark County residents, the Board of Health has convened a community task force to assess health care needs in the county and identify and prioritize strategies and action steps. With an estimated 17% of county residents without health insurance, and many more underinsured, the Board of Health recognized this as a significant public health issue.

The Board selected a task force, which consists of community members, labor representatives, health care providers, public health representatives, senior citizens, and health advocates. The task force has been meeting on a regular basis to address the requirements of the Board resolution. The task force has organized itself into four committees: a health data group, a community focus group, health care provider group, and a health care finance group.

The first task force activity is to complete a community needs assessment that will review and analyze health data for our county using the health department’s community health indicator report and other health data. The task force is assessing the impact that inadequate access to health care has had upon the health status of Lewis and Clark residents.

The task force is surveying community members and health care providers. This information is gathered through focus group discussions with health care users and by written surveys to primary care physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Participants are asked about perceived barriers, concerns and suggested solutions.

The task force is examining where and how health care dollars are used in Lewis and Clark County. As part of our initial study phase, the task force is trying to quantify the total dollars changing hands in our service area for healthcare services. The purpose of quantifying these total dollars is to provide a fiscal baseline that could be considered for reallocation toward any alternative service options that the task force may identify in our second phase.

Currently, the initial data is being collected, reviewed, and analyzed. The task force expects to complete the data collection and analysis in the next few months. It will then develop recommendations and priority action steps that the Board of Health and Health Department should consider in order to move toward assure comprehensive, quality health care for all Lewis and Clark County residents.

*The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents.*

A copy of the Board of Health's Resolution on Health Care is available on the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department website: <http://co.lewis-clark.mt.us/health>

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Lewis and Clark County

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